

At the Exploratorium
Winter Series 1986

Hosted by Charles Amirkhanian



SPEAKING OF MUSIC

A Conversation with
Pierre Boulez

Le Maître avec Marteau

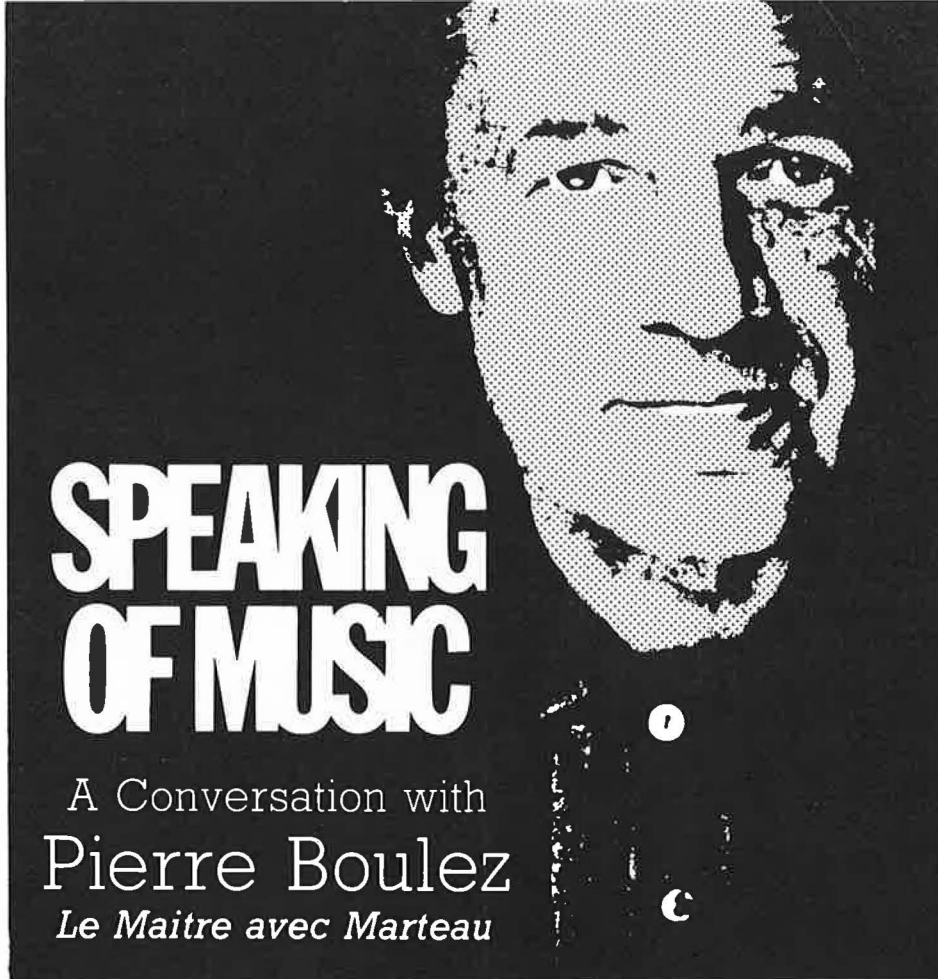
Sunday, February 16, 1986 2pm
Palace of Fine Arts Theatre

PIERRE BOULEZ

Born in Montbrison in France's Loire district on March 26, 1925, Pierre Boulez is one of the most prominent of 20th century composers and conductors. At present, he resides in Paris where he directs l'Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM) at the national Centre Pompidou. IRCAM is devoted to the study of both scientific and artistic sonic creation, and it is here that some of the most advanced research in computer music is currently undertaken by both scientists and composers.

This extends Boulez' early interest in the rational quantification, through the serial system, of musical parameters beyond pitch organization (as introduced by Schoenberg): rhythmic values, dynamics, and nuances of touch, achieved first in his *Structures I* for two pianos (1951-52). At IRCAM, founded in 1970, Boulez has been able to pursue his dream of creating an electronic music masterpiece. Since 1980, he has produced several versions of the composition *Repons*, performed last evening in San Francisco by the Ensemble Intercontemporain (which he founded) in the San Francisco Symphony's New and Unusual Music Series. *Repons* is scored for six solo players, spread about the concert hall, and a chamber orchestra. Each soloist has tape recorders carrying "background music" that they can activate, and their instrumental playing is fed via microphones to the electronic equipment for amplification, transformation and diffusion around the hall—in this case by Andrew Gerzso, who also will assist onstage in this evening's discussion and demonstration.

The equipment used in performance for these transformations consists of the 4X Digital Processor, capable of calculating 250 million operations per second, and developed at IRCAM by Giuseppe di Giugno, and the Hala-phone, invented by Hans Peter Haller in the studios of Southwest German



Radio, Baden-Baden. The system is able to alter the timbre of any sound before sending it on to the loudspeakers; it can also store an event and (for example) repeat it several times with programmed changes of pitch.

Since the mid-seventies, Mr. Boulez has devoted more time to his work at IRCAM and less to conducting, which had occupied him for two decades as a principal activity. In 1954 he founded the Domaine Musical concerts in Paris, which introduced the most challenging avant-garde music of the day. In 1971 he was appointed Music Director of both the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic; he held these posts until 1975 and 1978, respectively.

His recordings of music by 20th century masters, mostly for CBS, have become treasured classics, setting new standards of clarity in instrumental transparency, ensemble, and interpretation. At the same time, he has continued to compose music which is sui generis and which is widely considered to be among the most significant of our time.

CHARLES AMIRKHANIAN has been Music Director of KPFA Radio in Berkeley since 1969. Since 1983 he has been host and programmer for the Exploratorium's Speaking of Music series, which began in 1972. The American Music Center awarded him its Letter of Distinction for outstanding service to contemporary composers in 1984.

SPEAKING OF MUSIC

With human perception as its central theme, the Exploratorium has always used the insights of both scientists and artists to establish notions of how one sees, knows, and understands the world.

SPEAKING OF MUSIC is one of many Exploratorium programs that seek to discover why things are the way they are: how the artist, as well as the scientist, probes, investigates, interprets nature, and makes decisions.

At the Exploratorium, participation is the key, so we encourage you to ask questions of our guests.

Upcoming: the final event in this series until Fall 1986 will feature composer Charles Dodge from Brooklyn College discussing his most recent computer speech compositions: February 27th, 8:00pm in the McBean Theater at the Exploratorium. For reservations, call 563-4545.

Tonight's discussion is being recorded for broadcast over KPFA Radio/FM 94. Broadcasts of past events are heard once each month, recorded by Tony Ferro and produced by Russ Jennings. For details, consult the KPFA Folio, obtainable by subscription. Call 848-6767.

Of related interest: composer Ernst Krenek (b. 1900) will be featured in two broadcast interview programs recorded in his home in Palm Springs, California on two successive Fridays, March 7 & 14, 9:00-11:15am on KPFA. Charles Amirkhanian hosts.

Director of Performance Programs at the Exploratorium: Priscilla Cohen.

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THE EXPLORATORIUM

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